

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 YAOUNDE 0155

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PINT, EAID, CM

SUBJ: CAMEROON: ONE APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

REF: YAOUNDE 5618

1. SUMMARY. DURING RECENT VISIT AF/C DIRECTOR JUNIOR NOTED THAT CAMEROON HAD BEEN CITED BY REPRESENTATIVES OTHER CENTRAL AFRICAN STATES AS MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT (SEE REFTEL). HE ASKED WHAT CAMEROON WAS DOING RIGHT AND IF CAMEROONIAN EXPERIENCE COULD BE TRANSFERRED TO OTHER COUNTRIES. THIS MESSAGE EXAMINES CAMEROON'S APPROACH TOWARD DEVELOPMENT AS EMPHASIZING THREE FACTORS: 1) ADVANCE PLANNING, 2) UNITY THROUGH DIVERSITY, 3) CONTINUOUS STRONG STABLE LEADERSHIP WITH INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF GOVERNMENTAL PROCESSES. WHILE SOME LESSONS TO BE LEARNED FROM CAMEROONIAN EXPERIENCE, IT BASICALLY SUI GENERIS. END SUMMARY.

2. ADVANCE PLANNING: WHEN AF/C DIRECTOR ASKED CAMEROONIANS WHAT CAMEROON WAS DOING RIGHT, THEY INVARIABLY ATTRIBUTED SUCCESS IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS TO ADVANCE PLANNING. FIRST THERE ARE THE FIVE-YEAR PLANS IN WHICH THE WHOLE COUNTRY IS INVOLVED, BEGINNING AT VILLAGE AND INDUSTRY LEVEL, WORKING ITS WAY THROUGH THE MINISTRIES, THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL AND THE NATIONAL
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ASSEMBLY, WITH A STRONG GUIDING HAND FROM THE PRESIDENCY. THE END RESULT, IN CONTRAST TO MANY DEVELOPING COUNTRIES, IS A PLAN WHICH IS A POINT OF REFERENCE CORRECTLY EMPHASIZING INTEGRATED RURAL AGRICULTURAL AND INFRASTRUCTURE (PORTS, ROADS AND RAILROADS) DEVELOPMENT AND IS NOT MERELY A SHOPPING LIST. IN SHORT, CAMEROON KNOWS WHAT IT WANTS AND IS SERIOUS ABOUT ACHIEVING ITS GOALS.

3. DELIBERATE DECISION MAKING: CAMEROONIANS OFTEN MENTION THE REQUIREMENT OF THE COMPLETE DOSSIER. BEFORE VIRTUALLY ANY DECISION CAN BE MADE A DOSSIER MUST HAVE EVERY PAPER IN PLACE AND ALL RELEVANT MINISTRIES MUST HAVE SIGNED OFF. THIS MEANS THAT VERY FEW PEOPLE ARE FREE UNILATERALLY TO MAKE MOMENTOUS DECISIONS WHICH COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT THE WELFARE OF CAMEROON. DECISION MAKING IS UNDERTAKEN IN A DELIBERATE, STUDIED MANER, DEVOID OF IDEOLOGICAL RIGIDITY. WHILE THIS METHOD IS MADDENING TO EXPATRIATES HOPING TO SHORT CUT THE SYSTEM TO ACHIEVE AN EARLY ANSWER ON PROPOSALS, IT DOES SAVE CAMEROON FROM MAKING MANY UNECESSARY MISTAKES DUE TO SNAP DECISION.

4. UNITY IN DIVERSITY: PERHAPS THE GREATEST ACHIEVEMENT OF PRESIDENT AHIDJO AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAS BEEN TO TAKE A COUNTRY TORN BY CIVIL STRIFE, WHICH HAD BEEN DIVIDED SINCE 1917 INTO TWO DIFFERENT ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS SPEAKING DIFFERENT LANGUAGES, AND FORGE A STRONG UNITARY SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT. AHIDJO HAS TAKEN THE POTENTIAL POINTS OF DIVISIVENESS OF CAMEROON AND TURNED THEM INTO STRENGTHS. HE HAS A KNACK OF PICKING THE RIGHT PERSON FOR THE RIGHT JOB. CAMEROON HAS VESTIGES OF HAVING BEEN ADMINISTERED BY THE GERMANS, ENGLISH AND FRENCH. THIS HERITAGE OF HAVING BOTH THE COMMON LAW AND THE NAPOLEONIC CODE LEGAL SYSTEMS ENABLES CAMEROON TO HAVE MORE THAN ONE EXPERIENCE TO CHOOSE FROM. THE RESULT IS THAT THEY BORROW THE BEST FROM

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BOTH ENGLISH AND FRENCH. THERE IS A GEOGRAPHIC DIVERSITY WHICH RESULTS IN A GOVERNMENT WHICH DRAWS PEOPLE FROM A VARIETY OF SOCIAL STRUCTURES. THERE ARE THREE RELIGIONS: MOSLEM, CHRISTIAN, AND ANIMIST. THERE ARE SEVERAL HUNDRED TRIBES, WITH NO ONE OR TWO ETHNIC GROUPS COMPLETELY DOMINATING CAMEROON. THE DULANI (MORE A LANGUAGE GROUP THAN A TRIBE) DO DOMINATE THE POLITICAL LIFE, AS THE PRESIDENT AND MANY OF HIS CLOSEST ADVISORS ARE FULANI. THE BAMILEKE (AND IOBS FROM NIGERIA) DOMINATE COMMERCE, THE EWONDO HAVE LARGE NUMBERS IN THE SECURITY SERVICES AND AS CIVIL SERVANTS, THERE ARE MANY DOUALA AND BASSA IN THE PROFESSIONS, AND SO IT GOES. DIFFERENT GROUPS DOMINATE IN DIFFERENT AREAS, CREATING A CERTAIN DYNAMIC TENSION, WHICH IS NOT NECESSARILY UNHEALTHY COMPETITION. EACH GROUP HAS DIFFERENT SKILLS TO CONTRIBUTE AND EACH RECOGNIZES ITS INTERDEPENDENCE. THERE IS ENVY BUT ALSO ADMIRATION. AND THERE IS ALWAYS SOMEONE FROM A DIFFERENT BACKGROUND (LANGUAGE, ETHNIC, RELIGION, AGE) WHO SERVES AS A CHECK AGAINST THE ARBITRARY USE OF POWER.

5. TURKS AND OTTOMANS: AHIDJO HAS ALSO MANAGED TO CO-OPT INTO THE GOVERNMENT MANY BRIGHT, YOUNG GRADUATES OF ENAM AND IRIC (THE MAGISTRATE

AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS INSTITUTES) TO COUNTERBALANCE SOME OF THE LESS ENERGETIC REMNANTS OF THE FIRST GENERATION ELITE POLITICIANS. IN ADDITION, MANY GRADUATES TRAINED IN FRANCE, UK, US, AND OTHER COUNTRIES ARE STRATEGICALLY PLACED THROUGHOUT GOVERNMENT. THUS, THE PRESIDENT IS 53, THE PRIME MINISTER IS 44, THERE ARE FULL MINISTERS AS YOUNG AS 35, VICE MINISTERS AT 30 AND SECRETARIES GENERAL UNDER 30. ALL OF THIS MEANS THAT ONE BELONGS TO MORE THAN ONE DIVERSE GROUP, AND ALL GROUPS COME TOGETHER TO CREATE WHAT IS CALLED THE "CAMEROONIAN PERSONALITY."

6. CAMEROONIAN PERSONALITY: THIS PERSONALITY IS ONE THAT CREATES A SENTIMENT OF NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION OF ONE'S OWN FUTURE WITH THAT OF THE NATION AT LARGE. IT IS A VARIANT ON
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THE SO-CALLED WORK ETHIC AND GENERALLY PUTS DEVELOPMENT AND PROFIT OF COUNTRY ABOVE DEVELOPMENT AND PROFIT OF SELF. AS THE DIRECTOR OF INDUSTRIES IN THE MINISTRY OF ECONOMY AND PLAN (FRANCOPHONE TRAINED IN US AND FORMERLY ATTACHED CAMEROON EMBASSY) HAS REMARKED: "I FEEL THAT IN HELPING TO DEVELOP THE COUNTRY, I AM DEVELOPING MYSELF." THE RESULT IS THAT THE GOVERNMENT, WORKING THROUGH THE UNC PARTY, IS ATTEMPTING TO MOBILIZE THE ENTIRE POPULATION FROM THE VILLAGE LEVEL TO BECOME

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ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AS WELL AS DEVELOP-

MENTAL PLANNING AS MENTIONED IN PARAGRAPH 2 ABOVE. GOVERNOR MENGUEME OF LITTEAL NOTED THAT THIS CALLS FOR AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT WAY OF THINKING IN WHAT IS IN EFFECT A REVOLUTION OF THE MIND. APPARENTLY THIS REVOLUTION IS TAKING PLACE. THUS, CAMEROON IS MUCH LIKE THE UNITED STATES IN THAT IT IS A MELTING POT IN WHICH UNITY GROWS OUT OF DIVERSITY AND THE DYNAMIC TENSION CAUSED BY THE DIVERSITY IS OFTEN USED TO PROFIT.

7. CONTINUOUS STRONG LEADERSHIP WITH INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF GOVERNMENTAL PROCESS: PRESIDENT AHIDJO HAS BEEN IN POWER SINCE BEFORE INDEPENDENCE IN 1960. A RESPECTED AFRICAN STATESMAN, IN SPITE OF LEADING A COUNTRY OF LIMITED MINERAL AND POPULATION (7.5 MILLION) RESOURCES, AHIDJO AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAVE BROUGHT CAMEROON TO A PER CAPITA INCOME OF OVER \$325. PROGRESSIVELY HE HAS INSURED THAT THE GURC GROW TOWARD A GOVERNMENT OF LAWS AND NOT OF MEN. THE PRIME MINISTER AND SECRETARY GENERAL IN THE PRESIDENCY CARRY OUT MANY OF HIS FUNCTIONS EVEN WHEN HE IS IN THE COUNTRY. WHILE NOT A PARLIAMENT IN THE WESTERN SENSE, THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY DOESN QUESTION GOVERNMENT MINISTERS CLOSELY, CHANGES AND EVEN SENDS BILLS BACK FOR REDRAFTING. WITHIN THE INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT THERE ARE CHECKS AND BALANCES AND THE UNITY THROUGH DIVERSITY PROVIDES ITS OWN CHECKS AND BALANCES. AHIDJO IS NOT A CHARISMATIC PERSONALITY AND THERE HAS BEEN NO

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AHIDJO CULT BUILT UP. HE TRIES TO LEAVE THE DAY TO DAY DECISIONS ON RUNNING GOVERNMENT TO HIS SUBORDINATES. HOWEVER, A CHECK OR BALANCE THERE IS A SHADOW CABINET IN THE PRESIDENCY WHICH INSURES THAT THE CORRECT DECISIONS ARE MADE.

8. CONCLUSION: CAMEROON IS A STABLE, SERIOUS, DELIBERATE, PRAGMATIC COUNTRY WHICH KNOWS WHERE IT WANTS TO GO AND WHAT MEANS IT WISHES TO USE TO ACHIEVE ITS GOALS. IT IS NOT WITHOUT BLEMISHES. DECISIONS DO TAKE AN INORDINATE AMOUNT OF TIME. THE STRUCTURE OF GOVERNMENT DOES NOT PROVIDE FOR AHIDJO'S SUCCESSOR. THERE IS CORRUPTION, BUT IT IS NOT AS INSTITUTIONALIZED OR ACCEPTED AS ELSEWHERE. PEOPLE ARE DISMISSED FOR CORRUPTION, AS WAS THE MINISTER OF NATIONAL EDUCATION RECENTLY. THERE ARE PRESITIGE PROJECTS SUCH AS AN OIL REFINERY AND PAPER PULP MILL WHICH CURRENTLY ARE OF DEBATABLE ECONOMIC VIABILITY, BUT IN THE LONG RUN ARE POTENTIALLY PROFITABLE DUE TO PRODUCT PRICES INCREASE. MOST DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ARE REASONABLY WELL CONCEIVED AND EXECUTED. SOME OF THE KEY FACTORS WHICH HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO CAMEROON'S PRESENT LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT MAY BE ATTRIBUTED TO ITS UNIQUE COMBINATION OF CHARACTERISTICS, RESOURCES, AND HISTORY, WHICH ARE NOT ENTIRELY COMPARABLE TO MANY OTHER DEVELOPING NATIONS. ALTHOUGH THE CAMEROONIAN EXPERIENCE MAY NOT BE EASILY TRANSFERRED, THE IDEA OF ADVANCE PLANNING AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PROPER CLEARANCE PROCEDURE ARE CONCEPTS OF UNIVERSAL APPLICABILITY.

9. DEPT PLEASE PASS OTHER POSTS AS DESIRED.
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